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ABSTRACT

The teaching activities presented in this document focus on motivating students in the classroom. The paper describes (1) using stick figures to teach the use of adjectives, (2) using pen names in a covert letter writing project to teach writing skills, (3) increasing creativity in composition topics by brainstorming about ways to use bricks, and (4) testing powers of observation and knowledge of how people act by listing five specific actions observed in pantomine. (EL)

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Anatomy Adjectives

Draw a large stick figure on the chalkboard. As a class, ask students to bring this outline to life through adjectives. List as many descriptors as possible, following the categories showsnbelow or devising others of your own. If there's time, circle the adjectives that seem to go together and use colored chalk to sketch the creature they suggest.

As a follow-up, duplicate the stick figure so each student has a copy. This time each student transforms the outline into an

animate being through adjectives; for example, the student creates a monster, the Six Million Dollar Man, a character from a story, someone in the room. After all descriptive words have been listed, students may use pens or crayons to sketch the beings they have in mind.

On the following day, students write a story in which their adjectival creature is featured.

Gloria DeGaetano, Issaquah School District, Issaquah, Washington

Covert Communication

Join with another teacher and class for this covert letter-writing operation. The fascination of the unknown makes the writing and receiving of these communications special.

Begin by discussing with students why certain people such as movie stars and politicians might want to change their names. Bring up pen names, and list some adopted by famous authors. Each student then decides upon a pen name. Record these in absolute secrecy and give the list to your fellow teacher, whose students open communications by selecting pen pals from your class's list of pen names and writing the first of a series of letters. In case of odd numbers, enthusiastic correspondents can select two pen pals.

Urge students not to reveal their pseudonyms and encourage them not to seek out the identities of their pen pals. Appoint a courier in each class to collect letters. (Students agree to avoid profanity and highly personal topics. In turn, teachers agree not to read these letters.) The number of letters to be exchanged and the duration of the secret operation vary, and letters are sometimes written at home, sometimes in class. Specific topics such as exchanging opinions on a school issue are assigned on certain days.

Conclude the activity by asking students to make name tags using their pen names. Then arrange to meet the other class during lunch or at another convenient time so that students may discover the identities of their secret pen pals.

Eugene Moore, Githens Junior High School, Durham, North Carolina

Brainstorming with Bricks

If your students are even distantly related to mine, their level of imagination has often diminished by the time they reach senior high. Students who began kindergarten cheerfully creating imaginary playmates often end up in tenth grade sitting on their hands. Fortunately, the situation is not irreversible. The answer is not more papers on "How I Spent My Summer Vacation." ("How I Didn't Spend My Summer Vacation" would be better.) Instead, try simple exercises to get students to think in unconventional

terms. Suggest, for example, that an eccentric uncle has just left them ten million. . .bricks. They can use them in any way they want--except to build with. Ask each student to compile a list of ways to use the bricks, or have students work together in small groups.

Below are suggestions to help you get started. Objects other than bricks can of course be used, but whatever you choose, start building their collective imaginations.

Uses for 10,000,000 bricks

grind them down for eye shadow

Brillo pads for the Jolly Green Giant's frying pan

holding down clouds

earrings

conversation pieces on coffee tables

life rafts for suicidal

platform shoes

airmail stationery for people who can afford anything

bobbing for bricks at Halloween

knife sharpeners

gift-wrapped, all-occasion presents

roaches

big dominoes

small tombstones

subjects of poems

William Gallagher, Shikellamy High School, Sunbury, Pennsylvania

Let's Make an Inference

I bill this assignment as "a game that tests your powers of observation and your knowledge of how people act." It's a useful activity early in the school year because it gets every student up front for a few minutes without the elaborate preparation of a speech or the fear of being graded.

Begin by asking each student to jot down on a slip of paper a word that describes a mood or state of mind--nervous, for example. Each student in turn acts out for the class the word he or she recorded. Nervous might be conveyed by wringing your hands, chewing your nails, tapping your foot, an anxious glance. During the pantomime the class watches silently, each student jotting down five specific actions observed. Looking at the list, each student then makes an inference about the word written on the slip of paper. The first student to list five specifics and to draw the correct inference scores a point. You may wish to divide the class into two teams; the high scoring team are the champion inferrers.

Sister Mary Patrice Mahoney, St. Thomas Aquinas High School, New Britain, Connecticut